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CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT REQUIREMENTS

The California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Los Angeles Region (hereinafter referred to as the Regional Board) is the Lead Agency for evaluating the environmental impacts of the proposed amendment to the *Water Quality Control Plan for the Los Angeles Region (Basin Plan)*. The Regional Board is proposing a **“Basin Plan Amendment for Ammonia Objectives.”** The Secretary of Resources has certified the basin planning process as exempt from certain requirements under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), including preparation of an initial study, a negative declaration and environmental impact report (California Code of Regulations, title 14, section 15251). As this proposed amendment to the Basin Plan is part of the basin planning process, the environmental information developed for and included with the amendment is considered “functionally equivalent” to an initial study, negative declaration, and environmental impact report.

Any regulatory program of the Regional Board certified as functionally equivalent, however, must satisfy the documentation requirements of California Code of Regulations, title 23, section 3777(a) which requires the following:

- A written report providing:
 - a description of the proposed activity;
 - reasonable alternatives to the proposed activity; and
 - mitigation measures to minimize any significant adverse impacts.
- A completed environmental checklist that includes:
 - a checklist of environmental impacts;
 - a discussion of the environmental evaluation; and
 - a determination with respect to significant environmental impacts.

The attached checklist and the (**“Basin Plan Amendment for Ammonia Objectives”**) fulfill the requirements specified under section 3777, subdivision (a).

I. Description of Proposed Activity

The Basin Plan designates beneficial uses of waterbodies, establishes water quality objectives for the protection of these beneficial uses, and outlines a plan of implementation for maintaining and enhancing water quality.

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The goal of this amendment is to update the Basin Plan to reflect the revised criteria developed by the U.S. EPA, in the “1999 Update of Ambient Water Quality Criteria for Ammonia,” December 1999.

		Environmental Impacts
		YES MAYBE NO
1. Earth. Will the proposal result in:		
a. Unstable earth conditions or in changes in geologic substructures?		No
b. Disruptions, displacements, compaction or overcoming of the soil?		No
c. Change in topography or ground surface relief features?		No
d. The destruction, covering or modification of any unique geologic or physical features?		No
e. Any increase in wind or water erosion of soils, either on or off the site?		No
f. Changes in deposition or erosion of beach sands, or changes in siltation, deposition or erosion which may modify the channel of a river or stream or the bed of the ocean or any bay, inlet or lake?		No
g. Exposure of people or property to geologic hazards, such as earthquakes, landslides, mudslides, ground failure, or similar hazards?		No
2. Air. Will the proposal result in:		
a. Substantial air emissions or deterioration of ambient air quality?		No
b. The creation of objectionable odors?		No
c. Alteration of air movement, moisture or temperature, or any change in climate, either locally or regionally?		No



3. Water. Will the proposal result in:

- | | |
|--|-------|
| a. Changes in currents, or the course of direction or water movements, in either marine or fresh waters? | No |
| b. Changes in absorption rates, drainage patterns, or the rate and amount of surface water runoff? | No |
| c. Alterations to the course of flow of flood waters? | No |
| d. Change in the amount of surface water in any water body? | No |
| e. Discharge into surface waters, or in any alteration of surface water quality, including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen, or turbidity? | Maybe |
| f. Alteration of the direction or rate of flow of ground waters? | No |
| g. Change in the quantity or quality of ground waters, either through direct additions or withdrawals, or through interception of an aquifer by cuts or excavations? | Maybe |
| h. Substantial reduction in the amount of water otherwise available for public water supplies? | No |
| i. Exposure of people or property to water related hazards such as flooding or tidal waves? | No |

4. Plant Life. Will the proposal result in:

- | | |
|---|----|
| a. Change in the diversity of species, or number of any species of plants (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, microflora and aquatic plants)? | No |
| b. Reduction of the numbers of any unique, rare or endangered species of plants? | No |
| c. Introduction of new species of plants into an area, or in a barrier to the normal replenishment of existing species? | No |
| d. Reduction in acreage of any agricultural crop? | No |



- 5. Animal Life. Will the proposal result in:**
- a. Change in the diversity of species, or numbers of any species of animals (birds, land animals including reptiles, fish and shellfish, benthic organisms, insects or microfauna)? No
 - b. Reduction of the numbers of any unique, rare or endangered species of animals? No
 - c. Introduction of new species of animals into an area, or result in a barrier to the migration or movement of animals? No
 - d. Deterioration to existing fish or wildlife habitat? No
- 6. Noise. Will the proposal result in:**
- a. Increases in existing noise levels? No
 - b. Exposure of people to severe noise levels? No
- 7. Light and Glare. Will the proposal:**
- a. Produce new light or glare? No
- 8. Land Use. Will the proposal result in:**
- a. Substantial alteration of the present or planned land use of an area? No
- 9. Natural Resources. Will the proposal result in:**
- a. Increase in the rate of use of any natural resources? No
 - b. Substantial depletion of any nonrenewable natural resource? No
- 10. Risk of Upset. Will the proposal involve:**
- a. A risk of an explosion or the release of hazardous substances (including, but not limited to: oil, pesticides, chemicals or radiation) in the event of an accident or upset conditions? No



11. Population. Will the proposal:

- a. Alter the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area? No

12. Housing. Will the proposal:

- a. Affect existing housing, or create a demand for additional housing? No

13. Transportation/Circulation. Will the proposal result in:

- a. Generation of substantial additional vehicular movement? No
- b. Effects on existing parking facilities, or demand for new parking? No
- c. Substantial impact upon existing transportation systems? No
- d. Alterations to present patterns of circulation or movement of people and/or goods? No
- e. Alterations to waterborne, rail or air traffic? No
- f. Increase in traffic hazards to motor vehicles, bicyclists or pedestrians? No

14. Public Service. Will the proposal have an effect upon, or result in a need for new or altered governmental services in any of the following areas:

- a. Fire protection? No
- b. Police protection? No
- c. Schools? No
- d. Parks or other recreational facilities? No
- e. Maintenance of public facilities, including roads? No
- f. Other governmental services? No



15. Energy. Will the proposal result in:

- a. Use of substantial amounts of fuel or energy? No
- b. Substantial increase in demand upon existing sources of energy, or require the development of new sources of energy? No

16. Utilities and Service Systems. Will the proposal result in a need for new systems, or substantial alterations to the following utilities:

- a. Power or natural gas? No
- b. Communications systems? No
- c. Water? No
- d. Sewer or septic tanks? No
- e. Storm water drainage? No
- f. Solid waste and disposal? No

17. Human Health. Will the proposal result in:

- a. Creation of any health hazard or potential health hazard (excluding mental health)? No
- b. Exposure of people to potential health hazards? No

18. Aesthetics. Will the proposal result in:

- a. The obstruction of any scenic vista or view open to the public? No
- b. The creation of an aesthetically offensive site open to public view? No

19. Recreation. Will the proposal result in:

- a. Impact upon the quality or quantity of existing recreational opportunities? No



20. Archeological/Historical. Will the proposal:

- a. Result in the alteration of a significant archeological or historical site structure, object or building? No

21. Mandatory Findings of Significance

Potential to degrade: Does the project have the potential to degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory? No

Short-term: Does the project have the potential to achieve short-term, to the disadvantage of long-term, environmental goals? (A short-term impact on the environment is one which occurs in a relatively brief, definitive period of time, while long-term impacts will endure well into the future.) No

Cumulative: Does the project have impacts which are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project may impact on two or more separate resources where the impact on each resource is relatively small, but where the effect of the total of those impacts on the environment is significant.) No

Substantial adverse: Does the project have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly? No



IV. DETERMINATION

Expand on all “YES” and “MAYBE” answers given to the preceding questions in regard to environmental impacts. The evaluation shall consider whether the environmental impact indicated will have a substantial, adverse change in any of the physical conditions within the area affected by the activity. In addition, the evaluation should discuss environmental effects in proportion to their severity and probability of occurrence. (Use additional pages if necessary.)

3. WATER. WILL THE PROPOSAL RESULT IN:

- e. Discharge into surface waters, or in any alteration of surface water quality, including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen, or turbidity?** **Maybe**

Increased concentrations of NH_3 and NH_4^+ will be allowed in surface waters. The increased concentrations allowed will be 1.6 times higher¹ than the current Basin Plan acute toxicity objectives and 6.4 times higher² than the current Basin Plan chronic toxicity objectives; however, based on the best available science, these numbers will be fully protective of aquatic life uses. However, as detailed in the staff report accompanying the proposed Basin Plan amendment the revised objectives remain designed to achieve the applicable water quality standards and protect existing and potential beneficial uses.

- g. Change in the quantity or quality of ground waters, either through direct additions or withdrawals, or through interception of an aquifer by cuts or excavations?** **Maybe**

Increased concentrations of NH_3 and NH_4^+ will be allowed in surface waters. Where surface and groundwater are connected hydrologically, increased concentrations of NH_3 and NH_4^+ could occur in ground waters. Nitrate (NO_3^-) concentrations may increase as a result of the nitrification of NH_4^+ to NO_3^- . As detailed in the staff report accompanying the proposed Basin Plan amendment, the revised objectives reflect recent studies and the best available science. The revised objectives remain designed to achieve the applicable water quality standards and protect existing and potential beneficial uses in surface waters, and any increased concentrations of NH_3 , NH_4^+ and NO_3^- in groundwater will not adversely effect groundwater beneficial uses.

On the basis of this initial evaluation:

X I find the proposed Basin Plan amendment could not have a significant effect on the environment.

¹ Averaging the average differences between the cold and warm acute objectives.

² Averaging the average differences between the cold and warm and ELS absent and ELS present chronic objectives.

_ I find that the proposed Basin Plan amendment could have a significant adverse effect on the environment. However, there are feasible alternatives and/or feasible mitigation measures that would substantially lessen any significant adverse impact. These alternatives are discussed in the attached written report.

_ I find the proposed Basin Plan amendment may have a significant effect on the environment. There are no feasible alternatives and/or feasible mitigation measures available which would substantially lessen any significant adverse impacts. See the attached written report for a discussion of this determination.

DATE:

Original signed by

Dennis A. Dickerson
Executive Officer

California Environmental Protection Agency



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